

CINCINNATI, OH—Representative Steve Driehaus was sworn as the Member of Congress for Ohio's First District in a ceremony at Cincinnati City Hall today. Rep. Driehaus took the oath of office after he met with a bipartisan group of local leaders to discuss the area's economic concerns. Following the ceremony, Rep. Driehaus made remarks calling for bold and immediate action to stabilize the economy.

"What we need now is not just a band-aid for a 20th century economy. What we need is a commitment to move this country toward the economy of tomorrow," said Rep. Driehaus. "Our short term answers to immediate problems must have long term vision for the future of our nation."

Rep. Driehaus attended the symbolic ceremony ten days after being sworn into office in Washington. He has been appointed to the House Committee on Financial Services. Since the 111th Congress began, the House of Representatives has passed measures to ensure pay equity and legislation to reauthorize and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Text of Rep. Driehaus's remarks follow.

Remarks of Representative Steve Driehaus

Swearing-In Ceremony

Cincinnati City Hall

Friday, January 16, 2009

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you all very much.

It's good to see so many friendly faces here today. I want especially to thank Mayor Mallory, who's on his way to Washington for next week's events, and the members of City Council, who have let us borrow their chamber for the morning.

Thank you for joining me today when I can speak to you for the first time as your Member of Congress. It's a tremendous privilege to be here.

I chose City Hall for this symbolic ceremony as a reminder of my responsibility to all of you. It wasn't special interests in Washington or party leaders who sent me to Congress. It was the people of the First District who have given me this opportunity to serve. For that opportunity I am deeply humbled and sincerely grateful. And there is no better place for me to take this oath—to make this commitment to my constituents—than here in the heart of the First District.

We've hit the ground running in the 111th Congress. In the last two weeks, the House has voted to support pay equity for women in the workplace and to increase oversight and transparency in how the government spends your money.

And just two days ago we voted to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP. More than 230,000 Ohio children have benefited from SCHIP, children who otherwise would go without even the most basic health care. When President Obama signs this bill into law, another 4 million Americans will be covered. I pledged during my campaign to stand up for those who couldn't stand up for themselves, and I'm proud that one of our first achievements has been to act quickly for some of our most vulnerable children.

And we must act quickly because quick action is demanded. We are working to undo years of failed leadership and unfulfilled promises. And we are facing challenges that are unique in recent history.

America is in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Millions of homes have been lost to foreclosure and millions more are at risk. Our financial industry is teetering on the brink. Small businesses are struggling to make payroll and maintain their inventories. 2.6 million Americans lost their jobs last year, with one million of those jobs lost in the last two months alone, a staggering indicator of economic decline.

We have seen government intervention, unprecedented in history, to keep our economy afloat. While it has stabilized the financial sector, it hasn't been enough to reverse the decline. Additional action is needed, and it's needed now.

We know what makes an economy grow. We know that the economy grows when regular people invest their resources. But right now, people don't have the money to spend. Retail sales last month were the worst they've been in forty years.

The economy grows when private businesses make investments, and when our country is exporting more than it imports. But right now, banks aren't lending to businesses and the United States brings more into our country than we ship abroad.

We can't control those things.

But the fourth way an economy can grow is when a government makes smart, sound investments. Investments in infrastructure that create long-term, good paying jobs that can't be sent overseas. Investments that will unfreeze the credit market and allow businesses to grow. Investments that will stimulate development of new energy technologies and expand the manufacturing sector. Investments that will help families facing foreclosure stay in their homes.

That's a type of growth we can control.

Is this ideal? No. Taxpayers shouldn't have to bear the burden of the mistakes that led to this recession. The poor policies and failed leadership of past administrations took us down this path. Irresponsible investments, failed oversight, and simple greed have shaken this economy to its foundation. While it should not fall on the federal government and the American taxpayers to clean up this mess, we have little choice.

We face a half millions jobs lost month after month with no end in sight. Millions more families swept out of their homes by foreclosure. Small businesses across the country shuttering their windows. Bankrupt states and communities unable to provide basic services.

Next week, Congress will take up a stimulus package in the hope that we can jumpstart the economy with smart, sound investments. I intend to support this legislation.

Right now, a stimulus package is the only thing that can get our economy on the path toward recovery.

But what we need now is not just a band-aid for a 20th century economy. What we need is a commitment to move this country toward the economy of tomorrow. Our short term answers to immediate problems must have long term vision for the future of our nation.

The stimulus will help to rebuild our infrastructure. It will create new jobs to repair our crumbling roadways and bridges.

But it will also expand access to public transit at a time of record demand, improve our rail system, and spur the development of new transportation technologies.

These investments will help to strengthen our ailing power grid, and make it easier for families struggling to afford fuel and pay their electric bills.

But they will also invest in new green technologies, support research into renewable energy, and put us on a path toward a clean energy economy.

This package will help families facing foreclosures renegotiate their mortgages so they can stay in their homes.

But it will also offer communities four and a half billion dollars to reclaim and redevelop abandoned properties.

It will provide 95 percent of working Americans immediate tax relief, so that they have more money in their pockets to pay for day-to-day needs.

But it will also provide long-term incentives for new job creation and growth, helping to develop new industries and strengthen our workforce.

We will increase funding for Medicaid, assisting states in providing health care to our most vulnerable citizens.

But we will also work to grow the field of health care IT. We will encourage a national system of

electronic medical records, which will save lives and cut billions in health care costs every year. We will work to move American health care toward a system of wellness and prevention.

This stimulus package will help address our immediate crisis and lay the groundwork for sustained economic growth.

But it can also help us chart a course for where our country must go in years ahead. How do we rebuild the middle class and revive the manufacturing sector?

How do we solve the energy crisis, the climate crisis? How do we prevent another severe recession?

How do we pave the way for our children and grandchildren to grow and succeed?

How do we restore America's promise for future generations?

Next week begins a new and unprecedented chapter in our nation's history. With high hopes and a clear mandate, a new President and a new Congress will confront the greatest challenges our nation has faced in generations.

But we must not merely meet those challenges.

We must seize on the opportunities that will help move America toward a bright and prosperous future.

Because I firmly believe that when we as a nation face our greatest challenges, we realize our full potential and attain our greatest triumphs.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States.